

Testimony in SUPPORT of Proposed HB06616: "AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS."

Public Hearing: February 14th, 2023

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Dr. Claire Gibson, MD. I am a psychiatrist-in-training and I work at Yale New Haven Hospital, the West Haven VA, and the Connecticut Mental Health Center. I stand in support of HB06616: "AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS."

I currently care for undocumented patients in an outpatient community mental health center. This center provides free care to individuals who don't have insurance, including people who have are not eligible for Husky due to their immigration status. Even though this is a safety net system, our undocumented patients face significantly greater barriers obtaining care compared to patients with state insurance.

Some psychiatric medications are unaffordable without insurance coverage. Our center's pharmacy has funding to support our undocumented patients by providing their medications free-of-charge. However, this funding is extremely limited, so patients must submit proof explaining why they are unable to obtain their medications elsewhere. If this is approved, they are only allowed to pick up a week's worth of medication at a time. *Imagine having to return to your doctor every single week to pick up your medication.*

I share this story to dispel the belief that adequate structures exist to support undocumented people who don't have insurance. Safety net centers place undue burden on patients, especially those who are undocumented and uninsured. I've heard stories describing the lack of choice patients have in the care they receive, the long wait times for appointments, and other hoops that must be jumped through to receive even the most basic care.

It is incredibly demoralizing as a physician to watch as my patients struggle to get what they need to keep themselves well. We cannot tolerate watching our patients grow ill, and our patients cannot live under these conditions. I have heard many progressives decry, "Healthcare is a human right!" If you believe this but don't support HB06616, I want you to ask yourself, who do you see as human? It is time to transform this prejudiced system and expand healthcare access to all Connecticutians, regardless of their immigration status.

Thank you for your time,



Claire Gibson, MD